**How to Check Your Child for Lice**

Suspect lice if your child’s scalp is itchy, has several little sores (from scratching) or tiny specks of “dirt” (lice poop), but also be aware that there may be no symptoms whatsoever. Because lice are camouflaged, move fast and avoid light, they are hard to find if you simply part the hair to **look** for them. Instead, do what the professionals do, and **comb** for them. It’s easy, but you need to know what you’re doing. Follow these step-by-step instructions.

1. Purchase a good nit comb. See “The best nit comb on the market,” below. Every family needs one. Lice thrive in Austin’s climate and move easily from student to student whenever their heads touch. Think “selfies.”
2. De-tangle your child’s hair using a brush or wide-toothed comb. This step is essential to allow the fine teeth of the nit comb to pass easily from the scalp through the hair. Hair can be wet or dry.
3. Because lice stay on or near the scalp, use your nit comb to ***comb the scalp***for several inches before you pull it through the hair. Lice on the scalp will become ***trapped*** in the teeth of the comb.
4. Frequently stop to examine the nit comb under bright light (from several angles). Magnification helps. Don’t worry about flakes or nits (lice eggs); just look for live lice. Watch closely for *movement*.
5. From time to time, flick the teeth of the comb over a piece of white paper to release the debris. Watch for movement. Even tiny, newly-hatched nymphs (the size of a period) *move*.
6. Methodically comb the entire scalp, especially around the nape of the neck and behind the ears where lice like to hide out. This can take 10-15 minutes, especially if your child has long, thick hair.
7. For treatment, cleaning and laundry advice, you can click the Nurse tab of the BPE school website <http://bpenurse.weebly.com/> for the latest information from the CDC and call your pediatrician. Students may return to school immediately after treatment.
8. Please allow me to re-check your child after treatment before he/she returns to class. If a single louse survives, your child can become thoroughly re-infested in a month. *Even professional lice salons experience treatment failures.*  Early detection and re-treatment can simplify your laundry and your future. Please let me help you.



**The best nit comb on the market** (sold under various brand names, such as “*The Terminator,” “Lady Bug,” “Fairy Lice Mothers,” etc.*)is sold locally in **ULTA** stores ($16) and online (**Amazon** $10). Unfortunately, most retail pharmacies, such as Walgreens, HEB and Walmart, do **not** carry this comb. This comb is stainless steel, strong enough for the thickest hair, very gentle on the scalp and easy to clean with soap and hot water (130° kills lice).

**The most effective means of prevention** is regular screening by parents at home.The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control do not support classroom or school-wide screening due to lack of evidence of efficacy. **Please check your child for lice with a nit comb at least once a week.**

**When in doubt**, please ask me to check your child or drop by for a hands-on demonstration. I’m always happy to help.

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